

**CLAIMS:**

1. A method of providing conditional access to a content item, which content item is protected by a particular security mechanism, comprising providing unconditional access to a sample content item protected by the same particular security mechanism.
2. The method of claim 1, in which the protected content item is formatted using a particular formatting scheme, and the sample content item is formatted using the same formatting scheme.
3. The method of claim 1, in which the access to the content item is conditional upon acquisition of one or more rights.
4. The method of claim 3, in which the acquisition of said one or more rights by a client is refused until the sample content item has been accessed by said client.
5. The method of claim 3, in which the sample content item comprises an information element necessary for the acquisition of said one or more rights.
6. The method of claim 1, in which the content item is protected by an encryption scheme using a particular key, and the sample content item is protected by the same encryption scheme using the same particular key.
7. The method of claim 1, in which the sample content item comprises an advertisement or trailer for the content item.
8. The method of claim 1, in which access to the content item and the sample content item is provided using a content resolution protocol wherein the content item and the sample content item have a common content resolution identifier.

9. A sample content item associated with a content item protected by a particular security mechanism, access to the content item being conditional upon acquisition of one or more rights, the sample content item being protected by the same particular security mechanism, and comprising an information element necessary for the acquisition of said one or more rights.